

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Brooklands College  
Date of visit: 28 November 2006

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit. It focuses on the themes explored during the visit and does not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the college's performance.

### Achievement and standards

What do the 2006 examination results indicate in terms of success, retention and achievement? Have success rates on work based learning and key skills improved? What actions have taken place to improve progress of students in subject areas with low value added?

- In 2006, overall success rates for long courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 were above national averages. At levels 1 and level 2, success rates for both 16-18 year olds and adult students were maintained above the national averages. Level 2 success rates for 16-18 year olds were well above the national average in 2006. Level 3 success rates for 16-18 year olds have improved over 3 years and were above national average in 2006. Success rates for adult students improved to the national average in 2006, having declined in 2005.
- Retention for long courses was at or above national average in 2006.
- Achievement rates at level 1 and 2 for learners aged 16-18 and adult learners and for learners aged 16-18 year at level 3, have either been maintained or improved. Adult level 3 achievements were slightly below national average in 2005/06.
- Value added data, as calculated by the college, show that, in the main, students achieve examination success in line with those predicted by their prior attainment.
- The headline success rates for key skills have improved over 4 years, but still remain low. Achievements above national benchmarks were recorded for level 1 application of number and levels 1 and 3 information technology. All other subjects and levels showed poor success rates in 2006.
- Following a review of the status of apprentices on work based learning programmes, some learners, after counselling and guidance, left the

scheme. New procedures and tracking are in place and the assessment system is being improved. In 2006, however, both NVQ pass rates and full framework completion were well below national averages.

## Quality of education and training

Has the current round of lesson observations been fully implemented? Do the current observations indicate that the proportion of good or better lessons has improved? Are tutorials and learning support now part of the lesson observation schedule?

- Other college functions such as tutorials and employment studies are now routinely part of the lesson observation scheme. Part-time sessional staff are now observed teaching and have arrangements that allow them to observe where appropriate. Moderation of observation grades is now more rigorous. The profile of teaching and learning grades for 2006 and the current round are much more in line with those reported at the last inspection. Following the college mentoring and capability procedures, all those who were judged as unsatisfactory in the last round of observation, have improved or have left the college. Currently, the mentoring system is concentrating on those teachers who, although judged satisfactory, have significant weaknesses.

The previous AAV noted developments in teaching and learning and self-assessment in engineering. What are the outcomes for students and what developments are currently taking place?

- Managers are confident that improvements are being made. Training has taken place to help teachers use active learning strategies in theory lessons and peer observations are taking place. A subject learning coach has been identified and trained and sharing of good practice is developing. Managers recognise that there is still a need to develop classroom management and pedagogy in this area.
- Training on writing self assessment reports has taken place and has resulted in more focused and evaluative reviews. Time spent on this development by the Quality Improvement Manager was much appreciated by staff.

What progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses the inspection report noted in teaching and the use of ILPs in health and care?

- Teaching staff have undertaken training in lesson observation, provided by an external organisation. They report that this has helped to improve both the quality of teaching and observation skills. The paperwork for ILPs has been revised this year with a view to making it easier to consolidate feedback from all teachers. Students discuss long and short-term targets in tutorials. The extent to which this system will impact on students' learning and achievement is yet to be measured by the college.

## Leadership and management

What is the current situation regarding the merger with Spelthorne College? When will the merger take place and are there currently any barriers to progress?

- The merger is still due to be completed in summer term and the new college fully operational by September 2007. Plans for the merger are ambitious and will involve fundamentally reconfiguring the FE provision in North West Surrey. With these plans come a wide range of opportunities and risks. These involve developing new curriculum programmes in both Brooklands and Spelthorne and opportunities to build new accommodation to house them. Governors from both colleges are currently discussing the plans with the Surrey LSC. Risks such as the capacity to develop new curriculum programmes, financial backing and the challenges to the college to maintain and improve its current provision have been identified.

Have there been any changes to the management of work based learning?

- New managers are in place and a review of the status of learners was completed. Following this a number of apprentices were advised to seek other pathways. Better tracking and profiling of learners is now in place and the work based learning programme was relaunched as the Apprenticeship Academy. Key skills within work based learning is now taught in short, focused sessions and managers report better attendance and portfolio completion. It is too early to judge the outcome of these developments for learners. Managers recognise the importance to these programmes of developing assessors' understanding of completion dates.

What progress has there been in ensuring consistency in quality assurance across the curriculum areas?

- The college has been an active participant in the Peer Referencing Project which involves 25 general further education colleges in the South East of England. This project has led to training, networking and participation in validating self assessment reports in partner colleges. The resulting sharing of good practice has led to positive developments in the Brooklands self assessment process.
- Course team annual reviews are now moderated by heads of department and the quality improvement manager. The impact is that reviews now specifically reference evidence, they are more evaluative and data is more thoroughly analysed. For example, data on the outcomes for students of minority ethnic heritage are analysed and actions, mainly relating to recruitment, are recorded.
- Two additional quality improvement administrators have been appointed this year. This follows the successful appointment of a quality improvement administrator to engineering in the previous year.
- Middle managers report that they receive good support and training from the quality improvement manager.

What strategies are in place to improve the co-ordination and management of Skills for Life?

- The college offers discrete Skills for Life provision, most of which is English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). The college has been adjusting to recent changes in examination board and assessment requirements for ESOL. Increasingly, the college is also working with organisations to provide literacy and numeracy support for employees in the workplace.
- For adult learners on part-time courses across all curriculum areas, there is no formal mechanism to identify students' literacy, numeracy and language support needs at interview or induction stages. Students who self-refer or whose needs are identified by tutors are offered appropriate additional learning support. A more structured approach is in place for full-time students. Their literacy levels are identified through an initial diagnostic assessment and, again, students are directed to support where necessary. College managers recognise the need to develop further the skills of teachers so that they can more readily embed Skills for Life into their own teaching.
- With poor key skills provision in the past, the college has changed the way in which it delivers and assesses key skills. Since September 2006, key skills have been embedded within curriculum areas and taught through employment studies. The college is not yet in a position to

assess the full impact of this model on students' skills or on success rates.

What developments have taken place in the 14-19 provision?

- The college has considerable experience of working with learners as young as 14, through its well-established and successful Increased Flexibility (IF) programmes. Specialised diplomas present the college with both opportunities and challenges. The college is working with three partnerships – Elmbridge, Spelthorne and Runneymede – on the future development of 14-19 provision. Demand from schools for the college's involvement in specialised diplomas is high and the college anticipates participating in all five curriculum lines. Although it has no background in offering construction courses, the college is taking the lead in developing this vocational area and also intends to develop hair and beauty provision.

What progress with the changes to accommodation to engineering and visual and performing arts?

- New buildings for engineering and art are on track to be completed by the end of the summer term, ready for use in September 2007. Teachers in these curriculum areas have been involved in the design. Working with modern facilities and in close proximity to each other provides opportunities for greater synergy between the two curriculum areas.